

Devin Henry, *MinnPost*

WASHINGTON — First NASCAR, now military bands.

Rep. Betty McCollum has introduced an amendment to a defense authorization bill that would cap Department of Defense spending on military bands to \$200 million during the 2012 fiscal year. The Defense Department will spend about \$320 million on its bands this year, The Hill newspaper reported last week.

The House will vote on the bill's amendments this afternoon and McCollum's office expects her measure to receive a vote. The Defense Department declined to comment on the amendment.

"As families and communities across this country see critical services reduced or eliminated because of budget cuts, it's time to ask the Pentagon to make a small sacrifice in its musical budget," McCollum wrote in a letter to her colleagues.

McCollum introduced a similar amendment to another bill earlier in the session, her office said, but there is no record of there being a vote on it. At the time, she also introduced a measure banning the use of federal dollars for sponsorships during NASCAR races. The House voted down that plan.

Other members of the Minnesota delegation have offered amendments to the defense bill. The House will vote on a measure from Chip Cravaak that eliminates funding for the U.S. Institute of Peace, but there will be no vote for one from Keith Ellison that calls for the Defense Department to change its mission in Afghanistan now that Osama bin Laden is dead.

"Osama bin Laden is dead, and our own intelligence officials have concluded that there are fewer than 100 al Qaeda militants in Afghanistan. Does each al Qaeda member warrant 1,000 American troops?" Ellison said in a statement. "The American people deserve an explanation of how our strategy may shift and whether the continued presence of 100,000 American troops in

Afghanistan is justified."